

## CHERBOURG.

## I. THE WAY THERE.

THE reader who may have accompanied me this autumn to Portsmouth, or who shares my interest in Ships and Crews, and in our Training-Ships,\* will not be surprised to hear that I have just accomplished a visit to Cherbourg. The bustle in that Norman port was beginning to oppress my imagination. One heard so much of it, that it seemed better to face the reality and ascertain what it was like, than to be always haunted with the idea of the place flitting before one in exaggerated proportions. Normandy, too—historical old Normandy, which has so profoundly affected our history!—seemed worthy of a little quiet but accurate overhauling, when the question was of a new stronghold on its most advanced promontory. So the beautiful weather of the first week of October found me steaming down the Southampton Water (time, evening; a reddish-yellow moon hanging over the land on our starboard side) on my way to the “French Liverpool,” the important seaport town of Havre. Let us see, in this first paper, what there is of interest in the journey itself, before beginning with Cherbourg, its position and resources.

Havre, then, is the French Liverpool, and though small for a Liverpool, disputes the first place as a French commercial port even with Bordeaux and Marseilles. In general aspect, it has, of course, those usual French characteristics with which so many readers are quite familiar. We will look at it, as is natural, chiefly with reference to its *naval* interest. Entering the harbour, you find good spacious basins crowded with shipping. Conspicuous for size and appearance are the thumping Yankees, whose great French port Havre is. There they are, from New Orleans (New Orleans, nauticé), from Baltimore or Charleston, or other American cities, and the mighty bales of cotton or casks of sugar which they bring swarm on the quays. Naval fact first:—The Emperor is not sorry to see the Yankees prospering in sea trade—whether “carrying” or other—since the neutral flag now-a-days is to cover the cargo, and he may be at war with Britain and get his cotton, and many other goods, all the same. This our cousins feel the advantage of, and are not slow to express it.

\* See pages 517, 389, 557.



But French ship-building and foreign commerce increase also on their own account. There is a good deal of trade carried on by French ships from Havre with South America. They take out luxuries and bring back necessities: hides, for instance. A curious and picturesque result of the South American trade in Havre is the number of parrots—grey, green, or mixed—that one sees about. They are not the only foreigners for whom special cages are provided, by the way, since, opposite the American ships, “lodgings for coloured cooks and stewards” are particularly announced. Everywhere, in this world, we meet the materials of comedy, and the most business-like towns furnish no exceptions. Should you put up at Spiller’s, the English hotel at Havre, by all means go into the back parlour and hear the views of our Transatlantic friends on the “nigger.” “Is he human?” That is one great subject of debate there. Sometimes it is varied by demonstrations of England’s downfall next war. A stout English skipper was almost overwhelmed with prophecies which the United-Statesmen hurled at him, as to the combinations against us. But the stump oratory washed off him like spray. He drew his pipe out of his mouth quietly, and only ejaculated, “Let ’un come on!” It is characteristic of the queer relations between us and the Americans (for they cannot hate us; yet cannot love us either, somehow) that they were delighted with the exclamation, though it was opposed to their own argument.

Havre is a thriving place, with all this importation and exportation. A bran-new “Hôtel de Ville,” all white, and prettily carved, faced by those nice public gardens so agreeably French—is one symptom of this. A surer symptom is the spread of private houses, white villas, walled and gardened, all up the heights of Ingouville, which overlook the town, and from which you get a grand view of the embouchure of the Seine, where it mingles with the sea. Havre is modern from an historic point of view. Its importance is of yesterday, compared with the venerable Rouen, which *recks* (in all senses) of the middle ages. But it stands on a site the most significant in its associations of all Normandy; and strange memories rise before one, in gazing down on it from the heights. The Seine, there, was the highway which carried old Rolf, Hroff, Rollo, or Rou up to the heart of the France of the ninth century, and enabled him to plant his great colony (long-haired, horse-flesh-eating, wolfskin-clad, most indomitable men!) in the pleasant Norman land.

Verses from the antique Sagas come to one’s lips in watching the placid roll of the blue water, and thinking of those days:

The Norseman’s king is on the sea,  
Though bitter wintry cold it be,  
On the wild waves his Yule keeps he.

Or,

The Norseman’s king is on his cruise,  
His blue-steel staining,  
Rich booty gaining,  
And all men trembling at the news.

Apropos, in spite of their historians, the French vulgar have a dim notion that it was they who conquered England under the terrible William, and not this Norse colony, which used Normandy to form themselves a little in, before seizing the Teutonic island near it; one-third or so of which was peopled by other Norsemen, brothers and cousins to Hastings and Rou.

To return from the heights of Ingouville. Rich, busy, and gay, Havre is also stronger than it used to be. Our admirals have been there, and left their cards; and Government (as in most places where I was) are looking to the general state of the doors. Besides the regular sea defences which you may contemplate from the breezy pier, the high lands, the rocky coast to the northward about Havre, are either provided, or being provided, with regular defences. I don't profess to speak critically on this branch of matters, but the general fact is certain, and is a matter of self-congratulation to every Frenchman whom you may happen to talk with on such questions. "He, for his part, wishes peace. Why not? The two nations are at the head of civilisation. Why quarrel? But, after all, Louis Philippe was too complaisant in the point of England; and, enfin, the Emperor feels that he must maintain the position of France." There can be no doubt that this is good imperial policy as far as the dynasty is concerned; for it mixes up the private Frenchman's interest in French glory, with his interest in the family which has again got hold of power. And the activity of the Imperial Government in keeping itself before the eyes of the people is noticeable the moment you land. Enter a museum, the most showy picture is marked, "Donné par l'Empereur"—given by the Emperor—and a bust of the Empress stands on a neighbouring table. It is the same thing in the churches; many of which, from Notre-Dame at Paris downwards, are undergoing reparations, to which the Government contributes something.

From Havre to Cherbourg, you have no great choice of route. The roundabout way is to proceed by the Paris line through Rouen, to Mantes, and there take up the direct line which goes from Paris to Cherbourg. This is the course I would recommend to the pleasure-seeking tourist, and a still pleasanter variation on it would be to reach Rouen (like the old Norsemen above mentioned, who hauled their boats up ashore when necessary) by the water. But, at present, let us stick to the coast, and run over to picturesque little Honfleur opposite. We can do it, just at present, first-class for three sous, there being a tremendous competition between the steamers. They lie opposite each other, defiantly, at the wharves. When one rings her bell, the rival commences furiously to ring hers. The crews sing sarcastically against each other during the transit. The dearer and larger boat comes in first, no doubt; but in the three-sou one, you have the proud satisfaction of knowing that you tread the same deck as Louis Philippe, who embarked in her at Honfleur, in the indefinite disguise of Mr.

Smith. What could the ancient trouvères, who wrote so much about the escape of Duke Richard-sans-Peur in these regions, have made of this?

In crossing over from Havre to Honfleur, my eye lights eagerly on certain lug-rigged boats bobbing along the waves. These are fishing-boats; and the fishing-villages on the Norman coast are important to our present object as nurseries of the French marine. Such places, differing in size and importance, are scattered along the coast-line from St. Valéry-sur-Somme to Brittany. Dieppe, Fécamp, Etretat, Harfleur, Honfleur, Barfleur, all these furnish fishermen to industry, and seamen to the navy; not to mention towns like Caen, which are in connexion with the sea, though not absolutely situated upon it. A register is kept by a government official of all the men employed in maritime pursuits in each. They are exempted from the "conscription," in order to be placed in the "inscription." They are drafted away, when wanted, to Cherbourg, or Brest, or Toulon, as the case may be; kept three or four or five years in service, according to state requirements; and dismissed home when no longer needed. But at forty-five years of age, a French sailor, who has served, becomes entitled to a small pension, which advantage—with that of escaping the army—the fishermen may set against the impressment system. One naturally expects that the Normans should be the best French sailors, which is perhaps on the whole true. Nevertheless, I may mention here, that the French naval officers to whom I have explicitly put this question, though all giving the preference to the seamen among their countrymen of the Northern littoral generally, speak as highly of the Breton as of the Norman seaman. The Breton is a little man, but "dur" they say; his hardness getting its edge on rocks where the Atlantic endlessly breaks. But, indeed, you do not find in Normandy, anywhere (not even about Bayeux, and the Bessin, anciently its most Danish part), very marked traces of Scandinavian blood in the people. The Norseman was the noble amongst them, and, while the best of his blood went to enrich England, what was left would, in long centuries, get swamped in the native population. The heaven, however, still gives Normandy some speciality of type, I admit, even now, when centralisation rules everything in France; when you have "Seine Inférieure," "Calvados," &c., dismembering old "Normandie," or "Northman's-land;" and when, except as men of north or south, you find little provincial variety among Frenchmen.

While all Frenchmen are losing individual character, more or less, how should the fishermen retain much of it? I believe, myself, that seamen of all nations resemble each other more than other classes of the people—the seafaring life being a kind of nationality on its own account. So, you would probably think a Norman fisherman very like the fishermen on the other side—good at his business, undoubtedly—a weather-beaten, tawny-faced, meditative kind of



man—less frolicsome than other varieties of the *genus* sailor, and when peculiar, peculiar chiefly in his superstitions. All fishermen are believers in runs of luck—in lucky and unlucky articles.

I remember that, shooting once on the Essex coast, in a boat, the nipple of my gun fouled, and a passing fisherman, whom I asked to lend me a pin, replied that it was "onlucky" to have such a thing aboard; and they are apt to have more serious superstitions. The Church in France—in its sagacious manner—does its best to adapt itself to the nautical mind, as for each variety of mind it has its special treatment. Ascend that charming "Côte de Grace," that woody, ornate, pleasant hill above sea-born Honfleur, and, pausing to breathe in the healthy air, turn in to the little chapel of the Virgin among the trees. The chapel is all nautical. Little ships dangle from the roof, and seem sailing away over the altar. Votive tablets (purely Pagan in origin, let me remark) are there; pictures of vessels labouring in the stormy sea, while the Virgin in a blaze of light promises the safety which is there recognised by the returned mariner. All this is to the French seaman what Saint Nicolas is to the Greek one. The British seaman, though not without his own superstitions, yet believes fervently in God and mainly in the Admiral. "I hope your old commander is in heaven, Jack," said a gentleman to one of Nelson's men. "Well, sir," said Jack, "I don't know who'd keep him out!" This was no blasphemy, we may be sure.

But we shall see the French *motelet* again—Let us get upon the Cherbourg line. Shall we go back to Havre, and take boat again to Caen—three hours' sail? It will be better, I think, to reach our railway across country, and see a little more of the Norman land. The Cherbourg line passes through the very flower of the old Norman towns: towns odorous of history, aristocracy, mediævalism, towns whose bells make a reading man think of Duchesne's folio of Norman chroniclers: of Dudo de St. Quentin, Ordericus Vitalis, William of Poitou, the Roman de Rou, and Sir Francis Palgrave. Like a Roman road, the Cherbourg railway runs through funeral monuments; and the soldier who comes to Cherbourg to invade us may pause to think that in doing so he has to pass over our fathers' bones.

Out of the great routes in Normandy, you have in nearly every case to be content with a very rusty diligence. Off it reels (three ugly horses abreast, jingling with bells, driver in blue blouse and cap, cracking his whip and swearing), over streets execrably stony: then past lines of long, pale poplars, whose leaves shiver in the light, into a country of hill and valley, of wood and green field. It is a pleasant land this, and no wonder our ancestors liked it—the venerable Coke even insisting that Guernsey and Jersey were still *seisin* enough (as the feudalists say) for our claim to it! An Englishman, if he confine himself to the Norman landscape, may still fancy himself at home. Hill and valley are

clothed with the same wood. The friendly little blue-bell peeps out of the roadside banks; the vine which clings to the wooden houses is almost as hungry-looking as in his own colder land. But, chiefly, he is delighted with the orchards which abound in Normandy, and sweeten the air with their healthy smell; for thousands of red apples are still on the trees, though thousands are lying in rich heaps underneath them, and though sixty wagons loaded with the same may be counted at the Bayeux railway station this fine October day. No wonder there is cider everywhere, universal as red wine in the south, and drunk at every table d'hôte both for déjeuner and dinner.

It is a pleasant land, we say, and if we keep our eyes and wits about us in towns and villages, we shall find that it is pushing and thriving, now-a-days, too. At mediæval Rouen, for instance, there is an "Exposition" going on for the encouragement of industry; though Rouen is a great centre of industry, already, and sends the smoke of a swarm of chimneys sailing over the time-honoured towers of her unrivalled churches. Then, there is a movement on foot for the improvement of the breed of Norman horses, and long reports fill the papers about this. The Norman clergy, too, are active in their peculiar way. Wherever I go in Normandy, I find placards on churches and walls regarding a certain "Bienheureux Thomas." Who is Thomas, and why is he Bienheureux? Thomas, I discover, is a holy Norman of some centuries back, who, having remained all this time in a pious semi-obscure, has lately received brevet-rank at Rome and been made a saint. I do not grudge Thomas this promotion, coming (like that of some of my naval friends) very late in the day, and am sorry not to be able to attend the ceremony which the Archbishop of Rouen and other high grandees devote to the poor man. That ceremony is chiefly attended by the women, for the men, in those regions, rather shrug their shoulders at the clergy and their affairs.

I have mentioned the Norman women. I cannot say that they strike me as pretty, though their dress, with its high snowy cap, is so picturesque. Sometimes you see a stately, rather long, oval face, with dark eyes and fine nose: a face that might be that of an Eleanor Bohun or an Alice de Clare. But I vainly frequented the markets, and sought among the gigantic yellow gourds, and the heaps of small grapes, for the Arlotta of Falaise who won the heart of old Robert le Diable. They chatted over their stalls, or they came jogging down the streets on their rough ponies, between the panniers which held their cabbages and eggs—and she was not there. They are weather-beaten, too, les Normandes; or, when not tanned by the weather, have turned white and waxy in working over lace.

We reach the desired railway at the ancient spreading town of Lizieux. Like Rouen, this town is at once mediæval and manufacturing. Some of the quaintest old streets in Normandy

slope down its steep; but in the suburbs you see thread factories, and comfortable villas inhabited by Englishmen. There is something in its combination of the ultra-feudal with the ultra-modern which makes one think of Scotch Paisley; but Paisley is not so happy in its site.

We may drink our fill of old memories in these Norman towns. At Rouen, besides the graves of Rollo and of his son, they show the very dust of the heart of Cœur-de-Lion—a few ounces of white ashes, like ivory shavings, in a glass case, and indubitably the remains of the warm heart which beat so high in Syria. At Lizieux, Thomas à Becket lived in exile, and heard mass a score of times in yonder cathedral, where, as usual, they are cleaning and restoring; where there is a bran-new wreath of artificial roses on the head of the Virgin; and where you never enter without seeing a few old women dipping their skinny fists in the holy water, or a smug priest sneaking out of the confessional where he has been hearing the sins of a blooming young damsel in silk. But why talk of these people? Henry the Second of England was married before that altar to beautiful and high-spirited Queen Eleanor, whom the French chroniclers accuse, in their jealous way, of having flirted with a Paynim prince during the Second Crusade. Turning from the cathedral's grey towers, you will do well to descend the Rue des Fèvres, where the quaintest of quaint old wooden-built gabled houses nod to each other over the narrow stony way, threaded as it is, in the centre, by a trickling gutter. A foul, green, quasi-river, haunted by sick willows, crawls through the dense houses of old Lizieux; yet, foul as it is, the women squat on punts in it, to wash and beat clothes in a primitive style.

Leaving Lizieux on our journey, we proceed to Caen, one of the centres of feudal civilisation in old times. In the church of Saint Stephen here lie the remains of William the Conqueror. Caen is a populous cheery Norman town, set in a beautiful low-lying country, and fringed with a border of woody and leafy public walks. It is connected with the sea, and a decent sprinkling of small craft employed in the coasting trade may generally be seen alongside its modest wharves, looked down on by the Abbaye-aux-Dames founded by the Conqueror's Queen. Our countrymen much affect Caen, and have a little colony there, attracted by good air, cheap house-rent, and cheap schooling. For myself, I never sympathised with this genteel but ignoble kind of exile, to which nothing short of outlawry will ever drive me. Poor Brummell died at Caen, and, though hardly knowing why, one visits his grave after William the Conqueror's! They were both kings, at different times (with some difference of significance in the fact), of the great world of London. He ought to have an epigram for his epitaph, the dandy; but he slumbers under a common-place "George Brummell, Esq."

From Caen it is but a half-hour's run to Bayeux. The Cherbourg railway has only a

single line of rails, we may remark as we go. An English engineer who knew it well observed that it created an endless fluster among the railway officials to have to convey sixty or seventy cattle, deducing therefrom satisfactory inferences as to the job they would find it to undertake the transport of some thousands of troops.

Bayeux is another famous old Norman city connected with our history. Here is the world-renowned tapestry, which an English lady whom I met in travelling fancied (O shade of Queen Matilda!) had been that on view in Leicester-square! Here is another cathedral of antique dignity and beauty. But above all (as hinted before) Bayeux and its district was the most Danish part of Normandy. Beyond this station lies a part of the country from which came to our own the races of Bacon, of Bohun, and of Bruce. What great things—what a variety of great things—that sea-blood has done! Is it the salt in it, I wonder, that keeps it so fresh and wholesome?

While wandering thus from town to town, the tourist meets a constant succession of Frenchmen to study, batch following batch, like the plats at the table d'hôte. Does he encounter personal civility, notwithstanding the fury which is supposed to rage against us, peculiarly, at the present time? My experience says decidedly yes, and I shall give some emphatic instances of it by-and-by. The nations differ too markedly ever to love one another; and there are memories which *they* can never reconcile themselves to; and just now France feels very strong and sidgets under our great freedom of public comment. But it is a gross exaggeration to say of Normandy, whatever may be said of Paris, that an individual Englishman or Scotsman sees overt signs of national hostility. Things are not come, happily, to any such pass, and it is your own fault if you encounter anything but politeness, a readiness to exchange civilities, and even to form casual acquaintanceships, marvellously like friendships. The men of business are all pacific, as you may learn from the invariable "commercial traveller." The French bagman wants, indeed, that solidity of political conviction, as he wants that appetite for bottled stout, which distinguishes his British rival. He is a more frivolous man, and throws away the intellect which in our land pronounces on parties and statesmen, upon the levities of the feuilleton and the theatre. When he dabbles in la chasse he goes out for five hours and brings home a brace of larks. He is vain of his personal appearance, and will chat to a man whom he never saw before about his amours. Doubtless, he fancies himself ready to rush (if needed) upon her Majesty's troops. But it would be unjust to deny that he is courteous in his manner and pacific in his views as a general rule. Then, again, turn into the little cottage—a comfortable one, I am glad to say, for the most part—of the Norman peasant. There is a shower of rain, or you want to ask your way, and you step across his humble threshold into a little room

stuck over with cheap prints—lined in the ceiling with small chooses—adorned by a glass case, like a surgeon's bottle, containing frogs, for he judges of the weather by their rising and falling in the water. Well, the peasant will offer you eider, and bring out, too, one of the expansive loaves of his duskyish but wholesome bread. I made a diversion by diligence from Rouen to Gournay, once the seat of the great chiefs of Gournay, from whom descended the Gurneys and Mrs. Fry. A peasant in blue blouse, who was in the banquette with me, sang Béranger's "*Roi d'Yvetot*," expressly to please the stranger, and admirably well, too, albeit another traveller hinted to him that Béranger was "*défendu*" in France. All this kind of thing ought to be allowed for, and it would be unfair in me not to mention it just now.

But to our train again, which goes whistling away from Bayeux—not very fast—on its road. We are now carried out of the department of Calvados into that of La Manche, and we enter on the old "*Cotentin*"—the picturesque section of "*Basse Normandie*" in which lies the seaport, our destination. At Carentan, where Bishop Serlo clipped the too long hair of our Henry the First and his "*swells*," we seem to smell the sea at a few miles' distance. The coast along towards the north-west, towards Barfleur and La Hogue, is esteemed particularly beautiful; long sands stretching first, and then a rocky rampart rising bold and variously over the sea line. La Hogue was the scene of our naval glory against Tourville in sixteen ninety-two, when Louis the Fourteenth was aiming at a French despotism in things European, such as neither our pride nor our policy will ever permit. They say, that even now, in the high tides of spring and autumn, and when the wind and waves burst mightily on these shores, the fishermen find some débris of the wreck of Tourville's fleet, and that rusty English cannon-balls wash out of the sand.

We have been running through a pleasant and varied landscape meanwhile, and one rich still in associations. We have crossed long, flat, green meadows, very moist in rainy weather, when they overflow, and dotted with jolly-looking red kine; through bits of English landscape (as in Upper Normandy), full of hedged fields, orchards, and waving woods. The village of Brix or Brus, cradle of the race of the great King Robert, has been visible away on the sky line to our right. Many a troop of English cavaliers and English archers—the men of Chaucer and of Froissart—have defiled, with their banners flying, adown these wooded hills in the fierce Plantagenet wars. And now the landscape becomes wilder, as at home when we fly northward and get out of the midland counties. We pass through rocky valleys clothed with fir and pine, and leave altogether behind us the hasty yellow waters of the little Ouve. We could fancy ourselves in Scotland, but we miss the frequent ruin and frequent country seat, significant of a land which is prosperous now,

without (like France) having broken with its past or its institutions. At last we run right through a cleft between two valleys, and the passage brings us out at the station of Cherbourg, at the back of the town. A huge clump of a hill is behind us; trees planted to make shady alleys and walks are near, amidst the rather mean-looking suburbs of what we yet see to be a considerable place. Leaving the station, we begin to espy the masts in the commercial basin, and to get a distant glimpse of forts near which we *feel* there is the sea. A wide-spread, white-looking town, of irregular shape and build, is on our left; and, plunging into it, we find ourselves in Cherbourg, the only spot as yet where we have had (be it said in passing) to show our passport since Havre. What sort of place Cherbourg is my reader shall hear pretty fully anon.



## CHERBOURG.

### II. IN THE TOWN.

THOUGH modern as an arsenal, and though pre-eminently a work of art rather than of nature, Cherbourg has a history. The reader need not be dragged through the troublous controversies of the French savans as to whether it was originally Carobergus, Cherebertum, or Chieresburg. But it is interesting to know that somewhere about the year 945, the Danish king, Harold Blaataud (Blue-tooth or Black-tooth) was lying there, and that he helped young Richard Sans Peur, the third Duke of Normandy, against King Louis of France. Indeed, the whole peninsula of the Cotentin was more or less famous during ancient times. To the eastward of Cherbourg, a few leagues off, lies Barfleur, whence the fatal *Blanche-Nef* sailed, and drowned the heir of our King Henry the First with a whole company of high courtiers. Stephen carried Cherbourg by siege during his wars with the Empress Maud; and, at the end of that century, the place furnished a contingent to *Cœur de Lion's* Crusade. During Richard's reign, by the way, the English navy took a great start—another of the indirect results of the Crusades. That king issued the first "articles of war" about A.D. 1190; a primitive code, which punished the murderer by lashing him to his victim's body and throwing him into the sea.

The truth is, that Cherbourg never rose to the distinction of a place like Portsmouth; which is as historic, in its way, as Winchester. Cherbourg is essentially modern, a creation of engineering; of science; of refined skill in things warlike. From nature—unlike Brest, with its noble river and bay—Cherbourg derived only a good, though undefended roadstead, a line of rocky coast producing plenty of excellent granite, and, greatest attraction of all, a position facing England in a tolerably smooth part of the Channel. Art has protected the Rade, or anchorage, with an unrivalled breakwater (the "Digue"), has constructed one of the most con-

venient of dockyards, and has fortified Digue, dockyards, rock, and coast, with lines of cannon.

The battle of the Hogue, our constant appearance in war time off those coasts, our success in 1758—these were the later events which prompted the French to see what they could make of this ancient port on the advanced promontory of the Cotentin. The Bourbons began the work. The great Vauban had been there, and seen that the first thing needful was to defend the Rade. He had suggested plans; but many years passed before anything came of his suggestions. In 1777, during the American war, M. le Vicomte de la Bretonnière made a new survey of the district, and to him was due the notion of a Cherbourg Breakwater. Four years passed before a resolution was come to on the subject; but, in 1781, the Prince de Condé, accompanied by the Ministers of War and Marine, arrived there; a Digue was resolved upon and commenced.

This breakwater has its own history. The first attempts to lay its foundation (in a line from east to west, between two and three miles from the shore) failed. Every gale shook the masses of stone which were sunk by engineers in the waves. Pauses ensued in the work, but, nevertheless, it advanced; and advanced in spite of storms political as well as other. All French governments have done something for Cherbourg; and, while one of the basins of the Fort Militaire, or dockyard, bears (as we all remember) the name of Napoleon the Third, another bears that of Charles the Tenth.

When the Digue began to acquire solidity of foundation, and to defy wind and wave, the next thing was to fortify it. Protected on the eastern end by a rocky isle, crowned with defensive works, it presented, also, four great forts along its whole extent. Here, then, was gained the immense point of a defence for the Rade, where vessels could lie equally unassailable by weather or squadrons. We shall see the Digue again presently. But let the reader begin by impressing on his mind that the great feature of Cherbourg is this defence of its dockyard and roadstead by one of the grandest works of engineering in the world.

Meanwhile, let him accompany us from the station at the south-eastern end, or back of the town, and try to feel familiar with the place. As we go along, we reach the quays; the town lying to our left, the sea and Digue in the distance before us, and, just at our right, the commercial basin. This is an oblong-shaped piece of water for the reception of merchant craft of such peaceful traffic as Cherbourg possesses. We need hardly say that in this department there is little to boast of. A handful of brigs, or brigantines, are lying there, generally; one unloading pine, perhaps (with a crew so Scotch in appearance that we go up and address a sailor belonging to her, who answers in Norwegian), another from Guernsey, a third from Havre or Caen, and so on. The quay is sprinkled with cafés; and, pursuing your course round it, you come out in full front of the

Digue, with the sea breeze fresh about you. We are now on the parade-ground of Cherbourg, on the "Quai Napoléon." A showy equestrian statue in bronze, mounted on a pedestal of granite surrounded by a rail and guarded by a sentry, is the grand feature of this quay. Here, opposite the blue waters, the Cherbourgian *idea*, embodied in a theatrical bit of art, is rampant. For, on proceeding, we find the mighty First Napoleon, his cocked-hat slouched over a face full of what is intended to be the poetry of a gloomy meditateness and resolution, seated on a prancing steed, with his left hand pointing towards England. On one side of the pedestal is inscribed, in golden letters, the words which we here translate:

I HAD RESOLVED  
TO REVIVE AT CHERBOURG  
THE MARVELS OF EGYPT.

On the other side, the simple date of the Third Napoleon's visit last year. The statue is a poor affair, though showy in execution. But how execrable is the taste which could give such a gesture to the great man, who surely does not need a clap-trap celebration of this kind! Yet it tickles the common French mind. Brisk young commercial gents allude to it, with a polite chuckle, before you. No wonder that a sturdy Briton should be tempted to apostrophise the horseman with "Ah, your majesty! you prance, but you don't move on for all that!" As for Egypt, when one sees Egypt mentioned at Cherbourg, one thinks of the Nile—perhaps, too, of Nelson.

Turning our back on the theatrical nag, and, perhaps, musing of Astley's, we stride into the town. It is a white-looking, irregular town, of twenty-five thousand, or so, inhabitants, with winding streets, conspicuously clean—much cleaner than Rouen or Caen, and a paradise compared with the smaller Norman places. Though populous and reasonably extensive, it is, however, singularly ill-provided with the conveniences of good urban life. We heard one Frenchman tell another, that when Prince Napoleon Jerome passed from the railway station to the quay a couple of months since, he had to make the transit in an omnibus. This poverty of French social life strikes an Englishman much. For example, we had at my hotel a general staying, who had come to make an inspection, and whose guard of honour rather gave dignity to the establishment. Whenever this veteran went out, he was driven by a man in a blouse, as shabby as the carriage he drove. Cherbourg is bare and beggarly in all these respects compared with our seaports; and, indeed, its dulness is deplored by the French naval officers. It is simply a strong place, a cold, hard, clenched fist presented at the nose of John Bull. The church is ugly, the public buildings insignificant, the hotels ordinary, the shops third-rate. We had better stick to the military or naval works, for these are noble.

So, then, let us call a batelier or boatman, and take a look at things from the water.

But no, we had better first ascend that

grand-looking hill (it is hardly "a mountain" though the French take care to call it so) in the rear of the city, rising behind the railway station, like a baby Rock of Gibraltar. That is the Montagne de la Roule, from whose stony sides many a slice was cut to help the building of the Digue. There are two roads up it, a broad and a small one, made zig-zag along its sides, reminding one of the aforesaid Gib with its old Mole, Ragged Staff, &c., and the midshipman's matutinal cruise in the jolly-boat to fetch the ship's beef; a disagreeable duty which mids generally relieve by capturing the kidneys for breakfast. Her Britannic Majesty ascended the Roule, with the French Emperor, in a carriage. We shall go more modestly, by the narrower of the roads, afoot. The sun of a mild October day is quite strong enough to make climbing warm work, and we are glad to pause at the top and breathe the delicious air amidst the yellow broom which crowns it, and which recalls at once bonny Scotland and the Plantagenets. The eye ranges inland over a wild brown country merging into pleasant green plains; and, seawards, many a league beyond, the long, white-towered Digue, some three miles long, lies across the anchorage like a mighty bar of bone. At our feet is the town, bounded left and right by dockyard and mercantile basin, and trimmed somewhat at the corner just below us, where the railway station stands fringed by trees.

La Roule, the mountain of Cherbourg—quarry, look-out place, and fort in one—has been advancing in its military character since her Majesty's visit. The summit is attaining completion as a fortification. The masonry is of beautiful granite, the earthworks solid and neat, and a brand new caserne or barrack is just finished there also. In walking round, you observe spacious corners with room for big guns to traverse in; and the big guns, no doubt, are to be there soon. The barracks are extremely neat. They are sunk in the head of the hill without being dark or close; and the rooms, including kitchens with their large solid stewing-boilers, are substantial and convenient in all their arrangements. La Roule will not accommodate a large force; yet one of moderate size holding a fortified hill which rises over Cherbourg in this fashion, would be formidable enough. It is the Capitol of Cherbourg—its Acropolis. Capricious Nature has denied an Acropolis to Caen, which calls itself the Athens of Normandy.

La Roule once visited, we make our next excursion a nautical one, and are soon bowling along in a lug-rigged boat, leaving quays, houses, and the prancing statue behind us. The ear is startled at the boatmen's cry to the man steering of "loff;" one of several sea-terms common to both tongues, and probably drawn from a very remote antiquity.

As the boat moves cheerfully on its way, a look behind at the Port Militaire, or dockyard (it is on the right of us while so looking), shows the smoke of its forges, and the edging of cannon which it presents to the sea. But we soon begin to draw near to the Digue, and its



long fort-crowned line grows more imposing than ever. It runs across the roadstead, as we have seen already, a mighty sea-wall—leaving space inside it for from forty to fifty great ships, if need be—to any of which the dockyard, be it remarked, could give access at any state of the tide. The roadstead (*Rade*) is entered, then, by passages at east and west, right and left, that is, to us who are approaching the Digue in our boat. These passages, of course, are covered by batteries, the gauntlet of which everything that enters must run. At the eastern end, for example, there is the fort with which the Digue terminates, and vis-à-vis to it that which occupies the *Ile Pelée*. An enemy's ship penetrating between these would be closed upon by the fire of both, like a piece of paper by a pair of scissors. In fact, the *Rade* altogether is defended by nearly six hundred guns; and if we admit Sir Howard Douglas's calculation of the proportionate force of guns in ships and shore-batteries, it is hard to see where a squadron strong enough to master the place can ever come from. Sir William Armstrong's friends say that his terrible guns could shell the whole arsenal from a distance too great to make the Digue or other forts of any consequence; but, though the country justly hopes much from Sir William's discoveries, such speculations smack too strongly of exaggeration.

In visiting the Digue, the best plan is to land at Fort Central—the name of which sufficiently explains its position—and to extend one's observations towards either end as may be agreeable. So, we mount the landing-stairs, and are received by the "gardienn," a functionary perfectly enraptured with the work to which he belongs. It is "gigantesque," and without a parallel in the world, says he of the Digue; it is visited by people from all parts of Europe; "enfin, elle est magnifique." This enthusiasm—always delightful to meet with—for their public works is universal amongst the mass of the French. But they cannot bear criticism, patiently. They cannot hear of any great thing elsewhere without instantly attempting to match it; to "cap" the étranger's description by another of something Gallican. And, as a certain amount of sharpness is more general amongst the mass there than here, this tendency furnishes a traveller with a good deal of amusement, particularly in conjunction with that familiarity which Balzac so often alludes to as "*la familiarité Française*"—a lively assumption of equality in the midst of despotism, not unlike that of the slaves in the Latin comedy.

Standing, then, on the famous Digue, and listening to as much of the gardien's loquacity as seems profitable, we admit at once that we are contemplating the results of a very great and skilful labour. 'Tis a Babylonian sea-wall, worthy of Neptune's chariot-wheels, and wide enough to accommodate the moist old god should he ever wish to enjoy such a drive. It is based upon a bed of stones; a shoal formed of which you see, in looking down upon the water. It is built of immense solid blocks, and fronted by

a granite parapet of beautiful masonry six feet high, five to six feet thick, and coated with asphaltic. Fort Central—which we may take as a specimen of the four forts—is a round tower comprising a raised battery, and mounting forty pieces. Inside, as at La Roule, there is a barrack and establishments. The Digue has its own social life and population, even in peace time; there is a canteen where the labourers get refreshments; and the present writer passed two agreeable young ladies, daughters of an official, on their way "home." How could one help thinking of the pic-nics long ago to Plymouth Breakwater—which, by-the-by, is only about a third of the length—in one's youngster days, when the old Indescribable, 50 (she is a coal-hulk, now, alas!), was fitting out for the Syrian war, and the two sweetest things in life were Devonshire cream and the two Miss Collingwood Podgers?

The forts on the Digue are:

East Fort (sixty cannon).

Fort Central (forty cannon).

Fort Intermédiaire (fourteen cannon).

West Fort (sixty cannon).

The number of guns are those of 1858. But the number on the Digue is greater now than the aggregate of these would amount to; for batteries are being formed along the general line in addition to the regular establishments of the forts, and, in strolling along we come upon preparations for the mounting of guns frequently—ring-bolts in the parapet, tram-road for the carriages to traverse on, and such symptoms. Some of the new grooved cannon—those rifled with four instead of two grooves—are, I believe, already on the Digue. But the neat little caps in which the heads of guns are often enveloped, prevent the curious tourist from

seeking the bubble—information,

Even at the cannon's mouth.

And it doesn't do at a place like Cherbourg to go asking downright questions of a business-like description, note-book in hand. You would soon find yourself cut short with "*Connais pas, monsieur*," and sulky looks. As it was, I think, one or two of my neighbours at our table d'hôte thought I had been at Cherbourg long enough; and one queer old gentleman, with a decoration that looked like a little bit of tomato, asked me why I stayed at this stupid place, and did not go to Nice?

The Digue could, no doubt, mount five hundred guns; and, as has been intimated before, not only it, but several forts in addition, protect the *Rade*. Such are Fort Impérial (on *Ile Pelée* above mentioned), Fort des Flamands, and others, making a dozen in all. Yet the dockyard is fortified on its own account, inside the whole of them. There is a good deal of picturesqueness about these Cherbourg forts, perched as some of them are on clumps of black rock, and glittering grey in the sun and sea.

A dram to the gardien, and we are again afloat, and "running free," as the phrase is, for the shore. It is a spacious yet snug *Rade* this—



however inferior to Spithead or the Sound in scenery—with plenty of room to swing, and fifteen fathoms water, or so, underfoot. But how empty of shipping, and how different in stir, bustle, and gaiety, from the Portsmouth which we saw this August! Men-of-war there are none but a frigate and a corvette, to which adds itself a Dutch frigate, presently, come in for repairs. Yachts, pleasure-boats, passenger steamers, are not much seen at Cherbourg at the best of times, and it is now the dullest part of autumn. A pretty little steamer runs out some days; she is the boat that is laying down the telegraphic cable along the coast.

The Port Militaire lies on the north-west side of the town, beyond the prancing statue. For leave to see it, the stranger must apply—presenting his passport at the same time—to the Préfecture Maritime. This is the naval head-quarters, communicating by-telegraph with Paris, and to which came one morning, while we were there, the order to push on with the Chinese preparations. Admission to the Port was granted, without any questions asked, in my case: but the ticket is always for a limited time, and bears on it directions that you shall be accompanied by somebody; the whole affair being conducted, it is right to add, with every courtesy.

Walking briskly along the western streets—narrow, white, stony, and clean—one finds the dockyard wall to one's right, bounding a long suburban road, planted with trees. Soldiers pass at every step, as in all parts of Cherbourg: marine infantry in blue trousers, line regiments in red, the latter smaller men, nimble, bullet-headed, close-cropped, with white gaiters, who carry, swingingly and easily, muskets that might seem a deal too large for them. The sword bayonet is to be seen, too,—a short, rather curved, two-edged sword, with brass handle, which becomes a bayonet on the musket, and a short sword in the belt. But more interesting than these is a large white building, with a ground in front and railed, on the opposite side from where the dockyard is, and bearing in the centre, over an ornamental device, formed of flags, the words

#### EQUIPAGES DE LA FLOTTE.

This is an edifice of purposes and objects quite unfamiliar to a Briton; an edifice the very existence of which is an anomaly in British eyes, a SAILORS' BARRACKS. We pass a blue-jacket sentry, and, peering through the railings, we see groups of sailors walking up and down before the long whitewashed building with its hundred windows in a row, the sight being somehow an unnatural one. Superficially, all sailors resemble each other, and these men are more like British sailors than the soldiers are like British soldiers. It is the dress, no doubt, as well as the fact (true, at least, of the sailors I saw at Cherbourg) that in size and looks French sailors are more up to the British mark than most people, perhaps, suppose. Only, there is the old objection, which is equally felt in looking at Russians. They are too soldier-like,

too pipe-clayish; and when on Sunday they march down to the Quai Napoléon with drums beating before them, the rub-a-dub-dub and the regular tramp of feet scare away the sea poetry which belongs to a Guernsey frock and a loose-ribbed straw hat. So it is when they are amusing themselves. They pace along, bolt upright, in gangs of half a dozen, singing in a barren, noisy characterless manner; and when drunk even, they want Jack's riotous and brutal humour, and only look stupid. But they are fine, strong men, clean, and in good order.

There were about eighteen hundred seamen in these barracks in October. It is undoubtedly a handy way of keeping them while ships are fitting out, or paying off, or till they are required elsewhere. Naval men are getting tired of our plan of "hulking" the crews, while a ship is preparing, in rusty, wormeaten, small old vessels, involving an endless amount of rowing about; of discomfort, and loss of time. We need not make soldiers of our men, either; yet a Government Sailors' Home, so to speak; a building adapted to their habits, and conveniently situated, might be worth thinking of in our principal ports.

Near the building devoted to the reception of the "Equipages de la Flotte" are various traces of the kind of population in these parts. There are stalls where you see strings of sausages hanging up for military and naval consumption; wine-shops endlessly supplying a variety of drams, dirty little establishments of several kinds. An Englishman is stared at hereabouts a good deal, as he wends his way under the trees onward to the principal entrance of the dockyard.

Turning along to his right after a little while, and passing the outer wall, he finds himself approaching the drawbridge and gate of this now famous establishment. The Port is defended, not only towards the sea, but towards the town—towards the direction (from eastward and southward) in which we have come. A deep fosse, the rich green banks sloping down to a broad ditch of water, has to be crossed by the drawbridge before we enter. The walls are slit with loopholes for musketry, or "murder-holes," as the French more forcibly call them. Crossing the bridge we find a handsome building, the Majorité, or administrative offices, before us towards the left, with a very pleasant bit of garden and shrubbery in front of it. In the open space, many blocks of granite lie about, awaiting employment; and these roll past you, truck after truck, or larger vehicles, drawn sometimes by men, sometimes by horses, with stores, timber, and so forth. The regular ouvrier in blouse, at two francs a day, passes briskly to and from his work, and a general feeling that you are in a busy place takes possession of the mind.

Let us pass the inner gate, and present our tickets. "Monsieur is to be accompanied? Bien! There will be a gendarme immediately."

The gendarme—in the well-known cocked-hat, light blue trousers, and sabre, of his order,

a functionary inferior both in neatness and solidity to the nobler "Peeler" of home—now walks us round a set route. It is plain that this duty bores him, and he evinces no great anxiety to show us all the workshops or ateliers. Nevertheless, we see what we can, and with the impressions now to be recorded.

Cherbourg Dockyard is more remarkable for convenience, happy adaptation of new precautions and discoveries, than for size as a building port. A French naval officer is pretty sure to remind you of this, and to caution you against thinking of it as of the great historic ports of Brest and Toulon. The chief impression on the mind is of the beauty and airiness of the workshops, not of the number of vessels, which is comparatively small.

Naturally, the basins are first visited, the Avant-Port on the right opening into the sea, and communicating with the Napoleon the Third Basin inside to the left, and the Bassin Charles Dix, further on ahead towards the west. We repeat, that ships can *always* enter, which is very important when we come to try and estimate what the chief use of Cherbourg is, viz. as a place of support, refit, renewal, to a French Channel fleet.

The Avant-Port has little to interest us, the above fact once duly remembered. In Charles the Tenth's basin, we find several vessels, such as the Tourville line-of-battle ship, and the Forte frigate. The last is getting ready just now for the Chinese expedition. She is rather old, and, what is odd in these days whether in France or England, has never been fitted with a screw. The Tourville is below the newest standard of two-deckers; but a fine ship for all that. She is in commission (or "armé"), and, on going on board, we find men working at her. The other most noticeable men-of-war afloat in the basins are the Impétueuse, a large frigate, and the emperor's beautiful steam yacht Aigle. But, in none of these, is there anything peculiar to Cherbourg, or illustrative of any distinctions between the French and English navies. The general features of a man-of-war my reader knows already; and Cherbourg's real characteristic is, that it is a fortified workshop and anchorage. A casual observer, seeing so moderate an amount of ships, would probably think the noise made about the place exaggerated; but that is not the way to look at it. Glance at the Rade, where two great fleets could ride protected by the breakwater, and then cast your eyes round these roomy basins, these lofty ateliers, and remember that at this moment five thousand workmen are more or less busy here every day. Such is the number; and a great amount of matériel they must accumulate in the course of a twelve-month. Yet one sees no marked signs of preternatural activity either; whether in the dockyard, the streets, at the railway station, or in the Digue. Work goes on steadily, and France grows stronger, and that is all—which the public will probably think enough.

To return. Of the basins, the Napoléon, opened last year under her Majesty's auspices,

is the most remarkable. It is provided with five slips for the hauling up of vessels, which can here be taken into dry dock also, and examined and repaired at leisure. A dry dock—as we had once before occasion to remark—is just like a gigantic bath, inside which the vessel is propped up till the repairs are over, when the water is admitted, and floats her out again. Every convenience of this sort exists in the Bassin Napoléon III.

Between and around the basins, and facing each quay, are the various buildings devoted to manufactures or stores—buildings deserving great praise for their roominess and airiness. There is a workshop for each special production, and on a fine scale. Thus, there is the Atelier des Cabestans, the Atelier des Machines, the Atelier de la Fonderie, roofed with zinc, &c. The new god, Steam, is ruling at Cherbourg as with us. Enter one of the lofty workshops and you find him dominant. Machinery is whirring and burring away. Down come thundering hammers, shaping and turning iron, or wheels spin and hiss for the merciless mutilation of wood. One of the best departments of Cherbourg Dockyard is what we call the Blacksmith's Shop, where, amidst unceasing clang and glare, red-hot iron is teased and bullied into a score of forms. One of the departments to be improved is the rope-making one; for which their arrangements are still only provisory. And one of the newest plans is a great bakery, which is advancing rapidly, and will cost a large sum. Already that building presents an appearance which excites the universal curiosity of strangers; who, perhaps, wonder at the promise of an edifice devoted to purposes so prosaic, forgetting that bread helps to victual fleets, and that fleets mean (must mean, in the long run) war.

But it will require another paper to complete our survey of Cherbourg; the rather as we have some observations to make on the personnel of the French navy.



in the antique Roman fashion. Workmen poured in from all parts of France. The basins were hollowed by mining: the rock, of hard quartz, being blown asunder by repeated gunpowder explosions, while the sea was kept out of it, till wanted, by a special Digue. From 1809, more than six thousand Spanish prisoners were employed at Cherbourg; and, to the toil of these poor fellows—drawn from their sunny land to, perhaps, the coldest and most rainy town in France—the port owes the fosse which surrounds it, and the ramparts forming its inland girdle.

The Avant-port was an affair of ten years' work and millions of francs of expense. Napoleon visited it in May, 1811; but its flooding in August, 1813, was a spectacle reserved for Marie Louise alone, his Majesty being at that time at the head of the grande armée and too busy. The empress descended to the bottom of the basin, and was the last person inside it before the immersion, which took place on August 27th, in the presence of the Bishop of Coutances (who said the benediction) and of twenty-five thousand spectators, a squadron manœuvring outside in the Rade the while. One must read the publications in which the French record all these fine doings, one must see the animation with which they talk of them, in order to appreciate the pride and joy which Cherbourg is to the French nation. The avant-port is thirty feet deep, at low water, during spring tides, and capable of accommodating a dozen sail of the line.

The story of the opening of the still greater basin of Napoleon the Third is fresher in public recollection. During the interval between the Avant-port and it, was made the "Bassin Charles Dix," already mentioned as lying to the northward of the first-named, and which was opened in the presence of the Duc d'Angoulême in the autumn of 1829. Blasting in rock was the *modus operandi* here also. The two basins are of the same depth, and are united by a turning-bridge and by flood-gates.

Every French government has done something for the Port Militaire, and none has pushed it more energetically than the present emperor. We all remember the spectacle of last autumn, when the Bassin Napoléon III. received within its granite-clad sides the eager sea; and when the *Ville de Nantes* glided from her building-slip into the water, amidst a cheering hardly drowned by the cannon-firing. This basin contains four docks and five slips. It lies inside the Avant-port, and is capable of holding a still larger number of vessels of the line. The French writers calculate, indeed, that, what with the Rade and the three basins of the dockyard, a hundred line-of-battle ships might enjoy the protection of Cherbourg and its batteries. Yet, one still hears whispers of fresh works there, to extend the accommodation and resources of the dockyard. The bakery, mentioned in my last, will be a very fine building, and I believe that the barrack accommodation is considered insufficient as yet. The present barracks for gendarmerie, artillery, and infantry,

## CHERBOURG.

### III. AMONG THE SAILORS.

THE Port Militaire, which the reader is supposed to be contemplating, is of later construction than the Digue, and was a necessary complement to that great work. The Digue once established, the anchorage was, no doubt, protected, and might protect a fleet. But how refit and repair the fleet, or how add to it? A dockyard and arsenal were necessary, and were resolved upon by Napoleon in a decree dated the 15th April, 1803. The plan comprised an establishment of the first class, with an Avant-port and two basins.

The Avant-port (or outer basin, which you find on your right hand on entering the port) occupies a site which the sagacious eye of Vauban had long before designed for the same purpose. Its lines were traced out on the 9th May, 1803, and the work commenced with great spirit. Soldiers volunteered to labour,

are grouped together at the back of the port, and seem airy and lofty structures.

What strikes one most in the port is not so much the absolute amount of acreage covered by it as the conveniences it enjoys, and the neatness and airiness of the Ateliers, and other buildings. The timber shed is nine hundred and fifty-eight feet long, and supported by one hundred and thirty stone pillars. The large storehouses are close to the basins. Steamers can coal alongside the wharf, whereas with us at Portsmouth they must employ hogs and hulks. All these are elements of advantage to Cherbourg, even though it is not put forward by the French officers as a very great building port.

Yet we must do it justice in that particular also. Some very fine ships have issued from Cherbourg: le Friedland, le Henri IV., and several others. Ten ships could be built there at a time. The Cales de Construction, or building sheds, are planned on the same solid and liberal principle as other edifices there: particularly to the covered sheds in the north-eastern part of the yard, the roofs of which rest on arches, supported by piers of granite and slate. There is not much ship-building going on at Cherbourg just now, though we must not forget the activity of the last ten years and the resources of Toulon and Brest. What is most interesting in the Cales de Construction of Cherbourg at present, is the progress of the new frigate *Normandie*. This is a frigate of unexampled size and armament, sharp both at bow and stern, and intended to be plated with iron on the new principle. The hull is well advanced, and covered with labourers hammering away. A French gentleman, employed in the iron trade, is at Cherbourg, in communication with the authorities respecting the plating. Otherwise, there is nothing in the building sheds to excite particular attention; no overstrained activity about this bit of work is to be remarked, though the whole establishment is a scene of steady and continuous activity. Of the amount of military stores in the arsenal I had no opportunity of forming an opinion. The armoury is arranged with coquettish elegance of taste. You pass many rows of burnished cannon lying dismantled, alongside pyramids of brilliant shot.

Before quitting the Port Militaire through its well-defended walls, let us sum up, in a brief paragraph, the elements which make up Cherbourg. It is a French port, near England, well supplied with resources, capable of harbouring about a hundred vessels while building ten, protected by the largest breakwater in the world and more than six hundred cannon. This is, I think, a liberal résumé of the pretensions of a place which, a century since, hardly outvied Boulogne.

And now for a glance at the social Cherbourg, and the personnel of the French navy.

Cherbourg is execrably dull, as all the young "aspirants" and "enseignes de vaisseau" are unanimously agreed. In this respect it is far inferior to Brest, which, again, is inferior to

Toulon. There is a theatre, to be sure, where a company of strollers occasionally play indifferent vaudevilles. And, for the "men," there are "spectacles"—the Battle of Solferino, for instance—intended to keep up the patriotic spirit and the military vanity of the race. But, after these amusements, there remain only the cafés—poor imitations of the brilliant cafés of the Paris Boulevards—which line the quay along the commercial basin mentioned before. Enter any of these at any hour, almost as early in the forenoon as you like, and you find military and naval officers playing billiards, cards, or dominoes, smoking, or reading the journals. Light literature is the fashion, as in our own seaports. There is the *Moniteur de la Flotte*, to be sure, which contains all the naval news; but it has a feuilleton with a story. Then there is the *Charivari*, where they have been fond, lately, of caricaturing the British army. Another publication, *Le Monde Illustré*, deserves harsher notice. Some of the numbers of this journal contain papers about the treatment of French prisoners in England last war—a rather old grievance. In one anecdote, we are represented as encouraging a shark, by periodical pork, to swim round one of our prison-ships in the West Indies, to prevent the poor Gauls from escaping. In another, a British nobleman is represented as visiting a prison in England, on which occasion he naturally leaves his horse outside. Returning to mount, milord misses the gallant steed. "Where is my horse?" he asks of one of the prisoners. "Eaten, my lord." "What! Eat a horse! and in ten minutes?" "Yes, my lord," is the reply; "five to kill and strip, five to devour him!" And the narrator chuckles over the daring gaiety, in such trials, of his French countrymen. Who would think that, of these stories, the shark one was a joke of poor Captain Marryat's against his own countrymen as dealing with their own British deserters; and that the second is told of a peer, Lord "Cordova," or some such name, with a title never heard of in England? The author of these stupid calumnies in *Le Monde Illustré* is a certain M. Léon Gozlan (a Jewish gentleman, I believe), who is in some degree known in the French comic world. It must be added that three or four French naval officers, to whom M. Gozlan's fictions were quoted (and for whose courtesy, on every occasion, we here return our best thanks), treated them with contempt. But the ignorant mass—and the ignorance of the uneducated part of the French, concerning England, is beyond belief—are corrupted by this kind of thing, absurd though it be.

The first thing that strikes one about French naval officers is the fact that they are gentlemen, compared with the general run of men of corresponding positions seen in France. It is not only—though this, too, is the case—that the navy is a profession in favour among good French families, but the manners of the men are agreeable, quiet, sensible, ac-



complished, well bred. Perhaps an Englishman is prejudiced in their favour by finding them comparatively so like English. The reserved, solid kind of manner, the shaved chin and lip, occasionally the physical type of face, and almost always the dress, create altogether a curious amount of resemblance. English, though perhaps not often spoken, is always, more or less, understood among French naval men. You find Maury's Sailing Directions in their rooms. One middle-aged officer mentioned that he had read two hundred of our novels. Several circumstances tend to isolate French naval officers from the ordinary modern France. Not only is the regular isolation, especially from military society, stronger among them than you would expect to find it, but I doubt whether the French public does them, ordinarily, full justice. Many a Frenchman whom you meet in travelling will coolly give up the marine to you, in discussion, as inferior, though willing to contend to any extent for the superiority of the French army, the French literature, and everything else French. Yet how unjust is this! What can be more certain than that the French navy has fought admirably; did we ever get more decided advantages over it than our Marlboroughs, Wolfes, and Wellingtons did over the French army? An impression that they hardly get justice from their countrymen—that they are made the scapegoats of the national vanity—is calculated to throw them very much upon themselves and their profession, and the result is probably an increased devotion to it. Their political leanings—but of these a foreigner can only know very little (especially now, when the political silence of France is felt like a heavy—too calm—atmosphere, to strangers)—seem to be, in accordance with their naval position, less marked than those of most professions. They must hate the uncertainty which throws them, one day, into the hands of a different government from that of the day before; and it is possible that the Empire is accepted as a practical working government among them, even by the cadets (who must be numerous) of Legitimist and Orleanist families. At the same time, our British institutions seemed respected and understood by those with whom we talked; our navy certainly is; and it is a curious and wholesome symptom that they incline to think "Charley Napier" too critical on, and too much an alarmist about, his country's navy and naval policy.

The British and French arrangements as to the personnel of their naval services differ in some points worth remarking upon.

Their youngsters enter later in life, as a general rule, than ours do. Their average age at going afloat is above sixteen. Their training is more liberal, as regards instruction, than ours was until lately, and is managed by a college, and by a training-ship in Brest roads. I know no reason for supposing them to be better sea officers, measured by the good old test of handling a ship; and we could, no doubt, match any individual officer among them in scientific and

other accomplishments by some individual officer of our own. *Cæteris paribus*,—as entering later, their average book knowledge ought to be higher than ours; and I dare say that in the finer accomplishments (let us say, music) they have somewhat the advantage of us. We must not overrate all that kind of thing, however, nor forget that spirit, sinew, traditions, and experience, are the bases of the greatness of naval men. The French navy has made great strides within thirty years, and we may learn something from it. Yet, in passing from one "set" of the rising British generation—say at Portsmouth—to another of the rising French generation—say at Cherbourg—an observer does not feel that he has got into any remarkably higher region. To read some of our writers one would fancy that it was like going from Lilliput to Brobdingnag.

Having entered later, the grades of their service are different among the French. From aspirant of the second, they pass to aspirant of the first class; and from that to the rank of *Enseigne de Vaisseau*. We commonly translate that title by Midshipman in England. This, however, conveys a false impression. The "enseigne" messes with the lieutenants: which our mid does not, even after "passing" and becoming mate. The enseigne has charge of a watch; not the case with a mid. But the enseigne de vaisseau, though better off in status than our mate, has a long time to wait for his promotion; and this is a detail of which French naval officers complain. He remains often, for years, virtually in the position of a junior kind of lieutenant, without acquiring a lieutenant's rank and title.

The rank of "master" is unknown in the French service. It seems to have arisen in old times, with us, from the primitive distinction (so noticeable in Blake's days) between the fighting captain and the sailing captain of a man-of-war. The master ranks "with and after" the lieutenants, and is specially charged with the observations and the log: for which (jointly with the captain) he is responsible. In a French ship, the observations are managed by the officers in turns; and it has been suggested that we should imitate this arrangement. But, there are several advantages in keeping up the grade of master; and one is, that it opens a path to commissions to a class of families less well off or influential than those from which the service as a whole is officered. Observe, by the way, here, that there is no promotion from the ranks—no "coming in through the hawse holes"—in the French navy, any more than in our own. A family which could not manage a cadetship for one of its youngsters in England, can often set him going en route to master, as a master's assistant.

The French do not flog in their navy. They punish by imprisonment, by the usual restrictions on grog, and so forth. But they can, by the operation of the "inscription," keep a man afloat as long as they like; and the non-corporal punishment principle is not strictly carried out. In the case of certain offences—

such as offend a man's own shipmates as well as the laws of discipline—he is set to run the gauntlet even now. But nautical punishments have always been savage. "Tarring and feathering" and "keel hauling" are as old as *Cœur de Lion's* times; though at that epoch the British fleet was commanded by no less a personage than an archbishop.

Such are a few of the differences between the two great navies of Europe. Each may learn something from the other; and there is an honourable rivalry between them at present, untinged by malignity and accompanied by a mutual respect. An English naval man meets hospitality and courtesy—even without letters of introduction—at Cherbourg, from his rivals; and he will only laugh, like a man of esprit, if he is asked (with a merry twinkle of the eye), by a French capitaine of the older school, whether, when he was in the African squadron, he ever picked up, by mistake for a slaver, a Portuguese merchant craft? Apropos of this bit of professional humour, the French navy has been growing lately at the emperor's too gallant resolution to return the Austrian traders captured during the late war. What, ask our friends, are war and prize-money meant for? They feel it the more, because they are, as a body, poor men; and that, even in comparison with our navy, which is a poor profession enough, pecuniarily, Heaven knows.

Let us take leave of Cherbourg with a few observations on its general significance and importance to us; made in no bellicose spirit, however.

Here we have a new French dockyard and port, opposite to us; protected by almost unrivalled defences; capable of sheltering, refitting, and repairing a fleet; connected with Paris by telegraph and by a railway, the business trains on which do the journey in ten hours. Such a place is a new arm added to France for purposes of attack or defence; a distinct addition of strength since the last great war, when there was no French port between Brest and Dunkirk—the latter not suitable to vessels of the larger class. It is clearly a place constructed with military objects. Commerce did not require it, and can never support it; nor are there any internal needs which it meets. It stands on the rocky and rainy coast of a remote Norman peninsula, interesting solely to Frenchmen, as projecting (like a threatening arm) towards England.

Strong as it is now, its efficiency is increasing. Fresh guns appear on its Digue, fresh batteries among its rocks and heights, and new buildings rise in its arsenal. A submarine telegraph line is, even now, connecting it with the whole coast; and, before long, there will be branch railway communication, directer than at present, between it and the upper parts of Normandy. In these steam days, it is eight hours' distance by sea from Havre, and less than thirty hours' distance from Brest.

Cherbourg presents, in fact, one more place of first-rate importance for our squadrons to watch,

in case of a war, and one situated so as to be available for offence, while all but impregnable in itself. Blockading, however, is confessedly a more difficult task than formerly, because steam makes the imprisoned squadron independent of the wind, and enables it to run for new quarters, or join another squadron, with a facility unknown before. Then, supposing such French squadron worsted, its chances of escape are greater with steam, and there is this new port of Cherbourg to run for and refit in. Especially, however, will it be valuable as a support to an invading force. And, while this fact will always compel us to keep a large fleet in the Channel; so it will leave us, of course, fewer vessels to protect our distant commerce. Hence the mischief of allowing the French to get ahead of us in the number of any class of vessels, especially frigates, which they were said by several authorities to be superior to us in, at the beginning of this year. Hence the more than mischief of allowing them to be absolutely superior in the number of building ships in their dockyards, which, also, is unfortunately the present case.

Cherbourg must be considered as one more element of danger to the peace of Europe, inasmuch as the consciousness of strength is a provocation to use it, especially where its existence is a contrast to the memories and traditions of past times. The emperor may be thoroughly pacific, the French people may be disposed to acquiesce in peace; but, neither of these facts, though they may save us for a time from an act of merely aggressive war, can be expected to hinder the European politics of France from being influenced by her new scale of naval strength. It is not enough that we should be safe from invasion; we must not be outstripped in political importance, we must not be liable to be pushed aside from our first-class position, in any part of the world where our flag flies or our language is known. We are apt to forget how much our national importance depends on our downright strength, and that if we are strong by dint of being rich, we are rich, and originally became so, by being strong. Losing our naval power we should lose our colonies; then, by degrees, our trade; and of a certainty, sooner or later, our safety at home. It is not a question that will bear trifling with, and he who pooh-poohs our naval preparations is really contributing to our ultimate weakness in every other department.